The original turns 50 – Volkswagen celebrates five decades of GTI in 2026

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Compact dream car – In 1976, the first Golf GTI turned the sports car world upside down with its dynamic performance and outstanding value for money

- Most powerful production Golf GTI – The anniversary model, Golf GTI EDITION 50, with 239 kW (325 PS), is already available to order in some European markets and will be delivered in 2026

- A step into the future – In 2026, Volkswagen will transfer the GTI idea into the world of electric mobility with the all-new ID. Polo GTI

- Classic events 2026 – The Golf GTI will be celebrated at the season opener at Rétromobile in Paris (28.01.–01.02.) and the Bremen Classic Motorshow (30.01.–02.02.)

It is the world's most successful compact sports car: the Golf GTI. The original in its class. More than 2.5 million units have been produced to date. In 2026, the Golf GTI will turn 50 – and this will be celebrated with a variety of national and international classic events, the exclusive anniversary model Golf GTI EDITION 50, and the world premiere of the first all-electric GTI.

A success story since 1976. When the Golf GTI was launched in 1976, no one could have guessed that the 81 kW (110 PS) Volkswagen, with its red grille surround, black wheel arch extensions and golf ball gear knob, would soon become the world's most successful compact sports car. Only 5,000 units were planned, but in the first year alone dealers sold 10 times as many vehicles. In total, 461,690 first-generation Golf GTI cars were built.

It was the unusual overall package that struck a chord: a highly precise sports car for lonely Alpine passes and, at the same time, a practical companion for every day of the year, extremely economical

and instantly a timeless style icon. The price was also a hit: 13,850 Deutschmarks in Germany. The media spoke of the democratisation of the sports car. And indeed, the performance of the 182 km/h Volkswagen was impressive: with a sprint from 0 to 100 km/h in just 9.0 seconds, the 1976 Golf GTI left behind numerous sports cars and coupés that were easily 10,000 Deutschmarks more expensive.

The DNA for the past 50 years – and for tomorrow. The unique interplay of agile engine, lightweight front-wheel drive, balanced chassis, perfectly fitting sports seats and crisp, no-frills design still characterises the Golf GTI today. It is this synthesis that Volkswagen has continuously refined over 50 years – making the Golf GTI an authentic sports car and the original in its class. The fact is: today, when people say GTI, they mean Volkswagen. The crowning glory of this world-famous product brand in the anniversary year 2026 is the Golf GTI EDITION 50 – the most powerful production Golf GTI to date, with 239 kW (325 PS). The anniversary model is already available to order in some European markets, with the first units to be delivered in 2026. Volkswagen has also proven that the GTI philosophy is successful in other model series, especially with the Polo GTI. In 2026, a new Polo GTI will take off: the ID. Polo GTI. With 166 kW (226 PS), it will transfer the GTI philosophy into the electric drive era for the first time – there could not have been a better debut year for the first electric GTI.

Classic GTI in Paris and Bremen. The first five decades of the GTI will be the focus of various major classic events in 2026. The celebrations kick off from 28 January to 1 February in Paris at Rétromobile. The classic car show at the Porte de Versailles will celebrate its 50th birthday in 2026, just like the Golf GTI. Almost simultaneously, the first German show for classic vehicles begins in the Hanseatic city of Bremen: the Bremen Classic Motorshow. Here, the Golf GTI will be in the spotlight from 30 January to 2 February. Both shows are therefore not only the opening events for the European classic season 2026, but also for the GTI year 2026.

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